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THE STATE 4-H CLUB PROGRAM IS PLANNED WITH A PURPOSE

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A radio talk by L. F. Kinney, Jr., State Club Leader, Kingston, R. I., was delivered in the National 4-H Club Radio Program, January 5, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

What could be more appropriate on the first radio gathering of the New Year than a brief consideration of the purposes underlying the State 4-H program for 1935. For behind all of these individual 4-H projects of poultry, dairy, clothing, foods and all the rest, there is a larger purpose that is a fuller, happier, more satisfying rural life. Briefly, and very practically, our larger purpose is expressed in the four words from which our 4-H name is derived, namely, the training of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health along with our pledge to utilize this training for our club, our community, and our country.

Our state program must do much more than reiterate these nationally expressed purposes. It must provide for their application to the local conditions within the state in such a way that their inspiration and practical guidance may be made available to every rural boy and girl.

And so the state program proceeds from the general to the concrete and we have the following as a few of the ways in which our state 4-H program applies the general purposes of our 4-H work.

First and foremost our program provides for the bringing of the latest knowledge in agriculture and home economics in simple, practical, usable form to the farm boys and girls of the state. But obviously merely making this knowledge available is not enough. We all have quantities of knowledge before us that we never get around to using. Our program must provide for a workable method of getting boys and girls to want to apply these newer methods of raising poultry, or making more attractive clothes.

And this is where the club idea comes in as distinct from working with individuals. It is much more interesting to try to make good records when one is constantly working with others who are also making an effort to improve.

But the most important part of all in the 4-H program is the providing that each local 4-H club have a leader. These capable and enthusiastic adults are really the means through whom the teachings of the State Colleges and United States Department of Agriculture are really made available to the individual boys and girls.

These leaders are the finest men and women in their communities. They are persons who have had some training and experience in the project which the club is undertaking, but their particular qualification is that they like boys and girls and have a real desire to see each one make the most of his innate abilities. Their knowledge of the general 4-H policies as well as special training in projects comes from attending meetings of their county leader associations, or local meetings where an expert discusses special project problems with their greatest inspiration coming from attendance at the state 4-H camp in the early summer or the state wide achievement day in the early fall. Here the contacts with other leaders and with the members of the State College faculty and nationally known speakers develops the idea of the larger purposes in the 4-H program and give the confidence born of new knowledge as the leaders return to spread these new ideas in their local communities.

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But the state program must go even further in its establishment of guiding objectives for agents and leaders and among these objectives we list: The improvement of rural health, the training of rural leadership, making homes more attractive inside and outside; encouraging an appreciation of the beautiful things available in rural life, development of cooperative effort, and for older members studies of means of preparing themselves to undertake the financial and social responsibilities that will come to them as they become men and women.

Perhaps it seems as if rural life would be a paradise indeed if through 4-H club work these high and noble objectives could be achieved, and perhaps it occurs to you that after all there are a great many steps from the too frequent hard work and isolation of the farm to any Utopia of ease and culture.

Of course, this is the actual fact. The reason the state program has as its background these ideals of rural living, is so that the more practical every day steps that we take may all lead in the right direction. There is an old saying "Hitch your wagon to a star, hang right on and there you are." We plan to keep this star of a happier, more profitable and more satisfying rural life constantly before us and by hanging on tight enough we are confident that our state 4-H program will gradually bring us towards the desired objectives.

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